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**NSADaily**

(U) History Today - 24 March 2011

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(U) The 16 Feb 2011 *History Today* discussed Major Malcolm Hay, who led the UK War Office SIGINT effort in MI1b in World War One. Hay stormed out of British SIGINT in fury when he was turned down for the post of Director of MI1b's peacetime successor, the Government Code & Cypher School (GC&CS), in 1919.

(U) Hay returned to his estate in Aberdeenshire and became a distinguished historian, concentrating on the period of the Reformation and its aftermath in Scotland. He was given privileged access to the Archives of the Scottish Catholic Church and paid several visits to Rome to consult documents held in the Vatican Library.

(U) His wife, who wrote his biography, tells this part of the story:

(U) "It was during one of these visits, when staying in Rome with his old friend, Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes of Boyndlie, who at that time was Charge d'Affaires to the Holy See, that it was arranged for Malcolm to have a private audience with the Pope, Pius XI. This unusual, special audience alone with the Holy Father, lasted for over three quarters of an hour and an account of the meeting is written at some length by Malcolm himself. It took place in March 1931. In addition to the recorded story, a good deal is remembered of added topics, both by Father Fitzgibbon S.J. and by the writer. Malcolm apparently told Father Fitzgibbon that he had congratulated the Pope on the good cipher used when he was Nuncio in Poland, which apparently Malcolm had decided at the time not to crack (when he was at MI1b) as doubtfully worth the trouble. He further gave him the advice to scrap all the codes used by other Nuncios as antiquated and child's play to crack. Father Fitzgibbon adds 'This went down very well and the audience was protracted and very friendly and far ranging'."

(U) We thank the GCHQ Historian for this story.

(U) Want to discuss this item with interested -- and interesting -- folks? Visit the Center for Cryptologic History's blog, "[History Rocks](#)." (go history rocks)

(U) [Larger view of photo](#).

(U) Have a question or comment on "History Today"? Contact us at DL cch or cch@nsa.

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